

# AGAINST EXTRA DAYS!

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The following article received from Jerusalem is a clear statement from a distinguished thinker. While it does not represent the views of the *Journal of Calendar Reform*, it is offered to *Journal* readers in a spirit of fairness, with factual comments.

THE movement for Calendar Reform and its principal bearer, The World Calendar Association, has great merits, and the realization of many of its aims should be desirable. The differences between the lengths of a month, which are being neutralized by the Reform, derive historically from contingencies and give rise to inconvenience in practical life. The Christian Churches seem to face positively a relative stabilization of Easter for about the second Sunday in April. That would involve great practical advantages; on the other hand, the historical arguments (the coinciding of the Jewish Passover with the first full moon after the spring equinox, and the relation between Easter and Passover according to the Concilium of Nicaea) cannot be decisive<sup>1</sup>.

On the other hand, I wish to justify the opinion that serious arguments are in opposition to the extra days and to the discontinuity in the sequence of weeks, implied by the extra days<sup>2</sup>; arguments of such importance, that they might prevent the introduction of The World Calendar within a reasonable course of time—a fact everybody would be sorry for. The arguments are based on three aspects: the chronological, the religious and the practical one.

*Chronological:* Astronomers in particular<sup>3</sup>, but also historians<sup>4</sup> have often stressed the point of how regrettable it would be, if the periodicity of the week of seven days, which has been undisturbed since thousands of years, were interrupted. We know that a Monday of many centuries ago

<sup>1</sup> As stabilization of Easter is solely a religious matter and outside the reform of the civil calendar, The World Calendar Association leaves this matter to the religious authorities for decision.

<sup>2</sup> The one or two extra days were conceived by an Italian Catholic priest, Abbé Mastrofini, in his booklet dealing on the matter, 1834; it received three *Nihil Obstat*s and two *Imprimatur*s of his bishop.

<sup>3</sup> The International Astronomical Union, Commission 32, in 1922, approved the extra days in the new civil calendar and favored the 12-month revision. See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1932, Page 78. The British Astronomer Royal, Dr. H. Spencer-Jones, approves The World Calendar. See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1938, Page 65. Dr. William E. Castle's questionnaire to members of the National Academy of Sciences, which includes astronomers, showed that 76 per cent favored the new civil calendar. See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1942, Page 10. Resolution approving The World Calendar by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1936, Page 55.

<sup>4</sup> James Truslow Adams, foremost American historian, favors the new time-plan. See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1937, Page 113. Dr. Dixon Ryan Fox, President of Union College, Schenectady, New York, states: "Future historians would thank us if we could place the dates so that the weekday and the month-day always came together. For example, if an historian finds the date September 13, he immediately knows that it was on Wednesday in the middle of a week. This might give a different interpretation to an event than would be given if the date were September 11, which he would know happened directly after a Sunday." See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1940, Page 46.

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differs from a Monday of this year by a number of days divisible by seven<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the weekday is the same for the people of the various nations and religions. (Cf. also Professor W. L. Kennon in this *Journal*, 1940, p. 183.) This universality and periodicity would be definitely disturbed by the extra days. It may be sufficient, moreover, to refer to what has been pointed out by Professor S. Brodetzky (of Leeds University): *The Jewish Forum*, Vol. X, p. 374, 1927.

*Religious*: I am not authorized to express a view about the attitude of Christian Churches to an interruption of the seven days period by extra days. Many symptoms show that, in any case, the Holy See takes a negative position in this matter. Indeed, it has always expressed its view in respect to a *relative* stabilization of Easter, intrinsically excluding the *absolute* stabilization implied by extra days. (Cf. the article of Abbé Chauve-Bertrand, this *Journal*, 1941, p. 10.)<sup>2</sup>

The attitude of the Jewish faith is diametrically opposite to the conception inspired by Dr. H. W. Bearce's article (this *Journal*, 1940, p. 106). Transferred from Saturday to the Hebrew Sabbath, the extra days would mean a clear violation of the biblical commandment, to count six days<sup>3</sup> in every case and to rest on the seventh—a commandment which is kept so rigorously as to produce a large literature in respect to passengers crossing the Pacific in the one or the other direction (change of date)<sup>4</sup>. Dr. J. H. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, as well as Dr. I. Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, have therefore expressed public protest against any reform containing extra days, both orally and in pamphlets.

It is true, as Dr. Bearce mentions, that for their own religious purposes the Jews use their own calendar, a luni-solar calendar which is most interesting from the mathematical point of view. Nevertheless the extra days vitally affect the observing Jew who keeps away from work and business on Saturday (which is, by the way, only half a working day in many countries); his Sabbath would coincide every year with another weekday.

<sup>1</sup> In chronological reckonings the day is rarely mentioned, merely date, month and year.

<sup>2</sup> The Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, at Geneva, the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church have approved The World Calendar. The Western European representative of the Eastern Orthodox Church has approved it also, and the Vatican has frequently said that there exists no dogmatic objection to calendar reform.

During the pontificate of Pope Pius X, the International Congress of Chambers of Commerce received, in 1912, the following statement: "The Holy See declared that it made no objection but invited the civil powers to enter into an accord on the reform of the civil calendar, after which it would willingly grant its collaboration in so far as the matter affected religious feasts." See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1942, Page 81.

The former Lord Archbishop of Canterbury has officially declared himself in favor of calendar reform. See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1936, Page 13.

Abbé Chauve-Bertrand states: "Everything living develops and changes: we must be continually abandoning something of the past in exchange for something better in the future: the most ancient and venerable of traditional institutions must themselves be modified from time to time; and more than once people have regretted that reforms did not come about when they were first desired." See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1941, Page 14.

<sup>3</sup> There are many instances, particularly preceding the war, where industries and laborers worked five days only and not six as commanded in the Bible.

<sup>4</sup> The International Date-Line not only changes dates but incurs also the loss or gain of a day in the week.



Last, not least, the Moslem<sup>1</sup> peoples would not think of changing their weekly day of prayer, Friday, on account of any convention of the Western countries: The Indian Moslems<sup>2</sup> (almost 100 millions of active propagandistic tendencies) not more than those of the Near East and Africa.

Finally, in respect to the *practical* and political aspect of the problem, it may be sufficient to quote one example which clearly shows the difficulties of the introduction of extra days into life: the British administration in Palestine and India. The Government of Palestine has among the officials of its central and local departments Moslems and Jews as well as Christians (these being either Europeans or Arabs). The administrative work of the various departments is therefore distributed in order that the Moslems have their weekly holiday on Friday, the Jews on Saturday and the Christians on Sunday—an arrangement which is, naturally, achieved not without some difficulty. The relation between the Moslem and the Jewish days of rest, it is true, would not be affected by the proposed Reform, each of the two creeds preserving their custom of counting weekdays. On the other hand, the extra days would imply a change in the position of Sunday every year<sup>3</sup> (in leap years even twice), and would compel the Government to change the whole organization of work annually, a process which is almost impracticable. A similar situation would arise in India where, besides the Hindu religions, Islam and Christianity play an important part.

It seems that these arguments, among others, have influenced the representatives of Great Britain at the League of Nations, many years ago, to adopt a negative attitude in respect to the Calendar Reform proposed<sup>4</sup>.

Let us summarize: There are all reasons *for* and none *against* a Reform, which gives precisely 13 weeks to every quarter (except the last, containing one or two supplementary days), in order that every quarter should begin with the same weekday; this would hold as well for the second and for the third month of every quarter.<sup>5</sup> (The 365th day, as well as the addi-

<sup>1</sup> Mohammedan Turkey officially approved The World Calendar containing the one or two extra days, and Moslem Afghanistan for all international purposes. Fourteen countries have approved the civil World Calendar, among them eight Roman Catholic, two Protestant, one Eastern Orthodox, one Buddhist, and the two Mohammedan countries.

<sup>2</sup> Indian Hindu approval has been obtained through The Reverend Swami Omkar: "It is easy to see how happy this arrangement of The World Calendar is for all humanity—regardless of religion or race or nation. It is another step toward the universal brotherhood of man. The World Calendar has therefore my wholehearted approval and support." See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1939, Page 29.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 2, Page 126.

<sup>4</sup> Great Britain's Answer, April 22, 1937: "The Government of the United Kingdom are of the opinion that any consideration of the draft Convention would be premature pending further discussion of the principle involved in the reform of the calendar and of the particular method of reform to be adopted. They consider that the time will not be ripe for any further examination of the matter by the League until propaganda by those in favor of the alteration of the calendar has achieved more widespread and solid results than it has hitherto. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom remain of the opinion that, until the fixation of Easter has been achieved internationally, no useful purpose is served by attempting to proceed with the larger question of calendar reform." No fixation of Easter can be had in our changeable calendar; the decision for a fixed Easter rests with the churches rather than with governments and secular groups. See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1937, Page 134.

<sup>5</sup> At the League of Nations' Conference in 1931, the minutes show that the majority of opinions were for a perpetual calendar that included one or two extra days. See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1942, Pages 8 and 41.

tional day in leap years, could be inserted in December). Consequently, the whole year's calendar is defined in a simple and conspicuous way, if the weekday of the New Year is known.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, if the Holy See and the other Churches agree to a relative stabilization of Easter, this could be fixed for the second Sunday of April, i. e., between the eighth and fourteenth of April. To postulate *more* than that, would mean *less*—it would mean the postponement of the Reform as a whole *ad calendae graecas*, for chronological, religious and practical reasons!

## OTHER JEWISH OPINIONS

DR. JULIAN MORGENSTERN, one of the most eminent American authorities on the Jewish calendar, and President of The Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, from which a great majority of American rabbis have been graduated, wrote The World Calendar Association, February, 1942, giving his point of view, reprinted here with his permission.

"In principle, I am in sympathy with the project of The World Calendar Association, particularly if it is not at all the purpose of the Association to interfere unnecessarily in the religious calendars and ceremonial observances of various sects. I believe that it would be expedient for the Association to emphasize this fact over and over again. . . .

"With regard to the traditional Jewish religious calendar, the great difficulty in the way of correlating The World Calendar with it lies in the fact that The World Calendar would throw the traditional Jewish Sabbath out of place, in six years out of every cycle of seven years. I fear that this is an insurmountable obstacle for Orthodox Jews. I have given thought to the matter and see no way in which this obstacle can be surmounted. Otherwise, there is no difficulty whatever in the recognition and employment of The World Calendar by Jews for civil purposes.

"Of course, should our Government ever officially recognize the civil World Calendar, American Jews would accept this calendar readily and employ it for civil purposes. It would then become their responsibility to find a way to harmonize their traditional religious observances with the new and now official calendar.

"They have faced this problem before and found a solution.\* And I have no doubt that they could do it again if the need arises."

Other opinions are of value such as those of Rabbis Ephraim Frisch, Martin M. Weitz, Edgar Siskin, George Solomon and Dr. Abraham Cronbach.

"I rise to discuss the paragraph which has to do with the calendar changes. I am not an authority on the calendar, and have not studied the question of the effects the proposed changes in the calendar will have on the Sabbath. I am speaking with the greatest sympathy for our Orthodox brethren. I think there is entirely too much magnification of the importance of this issue. I think it misrepresents us to the world. If the world is going to be benefited by the change of the calendar as proposed, then we Jewish people of the Reform wing at least ought not to stand in the way.

"I am speaking with due reverence as to what a divinely ordained Sabbath means to me; it means that the human mind and human society thought out under Divine inspiration a day of rest. The mathematics and the calendar of it does not mean so much to me, and I do not think they mean much to my colleagues. As to the wanderingness of

<sup>1</sup> On this premise there could be no perpetual calendar.

<sup>2</sup> See *Journal of Calendar Reform*, 1932, Pages 111-114.



the Sabbath, it may have wandered before, for all I know; I think it did in the process of calendar changes. We are interested in a great institution and idea, and not in its geography or in its time location; and I do not think we would suffer any serious consequences if once a year the Sabbath was an Elijah—a wanderer.”—Rabbi Ephraim Frisch.

“The Sabbath evolved from an *irregular* and fourfold monthly experience to a *regular* weekly event. . . . If The World Calendar sanctifies the week additionally in that it can reintroduce an ancient Jewish practice—a *48 instead of 24 hour* ‘coverage’ for major rest-days and festivals, it may well be time to lengthen again the one-day and one-week festivals by one day for each. Thus Passover would be celebrated by *all* for eight, not seven days, and New Year’s, for two, not one days. Orthodox Jewry celebrates eight and not seven days for Tabernacles and Passover, and two, not one, for New Year and Pentecost, in order that Jewry all over the world shall be able to celebrate these festivals simultaneously.”—Rabbi Martin M. Weitz.

“I am in favor of any kind of intelligent progressive calendar reform. The question of tradition doesn’t particularly trouble me, especially when balanced against the social benefit which might conceivably derive from some effective calendar reform.”—Rabbi Edgar Siskin.

“I am heartily in favor of calendar revision and see no reason why Liberal Rabbis (and, for that matter, Orthodox as well) should not approve. The calendar has undergone change from time to time, not always wisely. This proposal is considered and sensible and affects no principles.”—Rabbi George Solomon.

“I am with you in the matter of calendar alteration. . . . When you come right down to it, what the Orthodox Jew wants is not so much one day of rest in seven as a day of intervals with which the Deity will be satisfied. With increasing obliviousness to tradition Jews will eventually be prepared for calendar change.”—Dr. Abraham Cronbach.

## Simplification

By ENOCH KARRER

SIMPLIFICATION of the calendar is a good idea. There is no reason why on petty grounds such as myth and worship of the Past, we discommodore ourselves and make necessary continuous expenditure of nervous energy every day of our lives. Men have changed calendars before to suit their present needs and philosophies. Such changes have sometimes been in the direction of simplifications whose benefits we have inherited; sometimes not. We have the same rights, the same incentives, and equal abilities, to better our customs, habits, and social structures; yea, it is our duty to make them more fitted to our new world, not only for ourselves but for the sake of those to follow. Such mechanical things may seem insignificant and bothersome to make, but they have tremendous spiritual effects.

A new calendar for a new world is befitting the times.

To simplify our calendar may be a first step in taking hold of other things we have inherited, and that, although requiring change, we cannot change because we hold them in awe, or reverence, or by habit, or in fear. Some of these have kept us from fully and effectively arriving at and trying out the most ideal form of government; namely, a representative democracy. To mention a few: uniform price of things, a uniform price for a new world, a uniform system of measurement, a simplification of our monetary system, a simplification of language.

Would it not be a wonderful consummation to get a calendar reform a-going in or before 1945?

# CALENDAR REFORM—AND WHY

By ELISABETH ACHELIS

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*Address Before the Amateur Astronomers Association, November 4, 1942*

LANCELOT HOGBEN, in his illuminating book, *Science for the Citizen*, devotes the entire first chapter to the coming of the calendar with these significant words in the opening sentence:

"... up to the present philosophers have only interpreted the world, it is also necessary to change it."

and further are these trenchant observations:

"The recognition of the passage of time now became a primary necessity of social life . . . man learned to measure things. He learned to keep account of past events. . . . The arts of writing, architecture, numbering, and in particular geometry, which was the offspring of star lore and shadow reckoning, were all by-products of man's first organized achievement, the construction of the calendar. . . .

"Science began when man started to plan ahead for the seasons, because planning ahead for the seasons demanded an organized body of continuous observations and a permanent record of their recurrence."

Here we are told clearly and directly that science began with the need for planning and recording the seasons in an organized manner for man's daily social and civil needs. This is a surprising statement, isn't it? How many of us associate the birth of science with the seasons—the calendar?

Now the calendar has always been based on three immutable laws of nature: the day with its inflexible alternating light and dark periods; the seasons, of which there are four in the temperate zones; and the year, which completes the annual circuit of the earth's journey around the sun.

Man's constant concern has ever been to keep the calendar in accord with these basic laws of nature, and were it not for two other elements that have entered into it, our time-system would be comparatively simple and natural. But the month and the week, which are outside of nature's laws, have complicated it. Not until today is the real problem of our calendar being solved, and this is the subject of my talk to you tonight.

The month, although it originated with the four phases of the moon, has been an independent time-unit for more than 60 centuries. Previous to this epochal change, the moon calendar of 354 days had been man's time-system practically throughout the entire world. There are people today who are still using this ancient calendar, hoary with age. It was only upon careful observation and study, through many hundreds of years, that man gradually became aware that the moon had no relation whatever to the seasons. With the ever increasing need for planning and producing more crops for the better nourishment of the people, the careful recording